

## **Fermilab Employee Advisory Group Meeting**

**February 23, 2012**

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM, One East

### **AGENDA TOPICS**

- Updates
- Summer Hiring rules
- Management response to previous recommendations
- Reward and recognition recommendations
- WDRS/communication recommendations
- New EAG member recruitment process
- Preview the Fermilab documentary
- 2012 Topics and issues for the EAG
- Employee comments from the web
- Confirm meeting dates beyond March

### **MEETING SUMMARY**

#### **1) Management Updates**

The President's 2013 budget was released and includes cuts to the lab; most have seen Pier's Directors Corner on this. Basically all agree it makes sense to wait to see results from the LHC until determining if the ILC is the correct next high energy physics project, so the ILC budget has been cut \$20 million in 2013 with \$10 million of that currently coming to the lab. This is the same technology as Project X, so this cut also has significant impact on Project X as well. The lab is re-optimizing that project to account for this significant cut. Other cuts are to the LBNE project. The \$500 million project has about half the effort at Fermilab. LBNE received approval to work towards critical decision 1. Received only \$10 million of the requested \$35 million of next year's budget, because recent progress was not taken into account in the decision. DOE understands this, has replaced \$5 million to the budget under detector R&D, plus another \$4 million was restored from a mistake that was made. Still looking for more opportunities to support the total budget. Lab is now planning a wide range of scenarios to plan for future possible iterations of the budget.

#### **2) Summer Hiring Rules**

These are not internships, but general summer jobs for kids age 16 through college, who are enrolled in school. Juanita Frazier identified some challenges that create a potentially negative experience for this program. Summer employment for youth is limited and parents can be very motivated, including children of employees. Summer employment is increasingly rare for minority youth in the community. Lab wants to be a good member of the community. There are positive reasons to hire children of lab employees for summer jobs, as they tend to be well behaved and motivated. Currently,

parents can directly solicit friends within the lab to get jobs for their children. Some hiring managers are made uncomfortable and even feel intimidated if certain hires are not made. The challenge is how to address that and also protect the ability to hire children of employees. Currently when requisitions come for summer jobs, the selected persons name is generally already identified. The new approach would take the names off the requisition and create a more open process. A list of pre-screened candidates will be sent to hiring managers anonymously so no names are included and hiring manager can select the best candidate for the job. This would improve responsiveness of the applicant in getting their information to the lab in time and allow a more fair evaluation of candidates according to the needs of the job. The lab believes it will get negative feedback about these changes, particularly from those that have been able to get jobs for their kids directly. We are seeking to increase fairness, while maintaining a preference for hiring children of employees.

How does hiring for summer help differ from full-time? Don't name request for full-time, summer is abbreviated process, and asking much less of summer candidates as they have little or no demonstrated work experience. Last summer the lab filled 53 summer jobs (this lower than normal because of the budget). There were hundreds of applicants, and most positions were name requested, and roughly half were re-hires. Under the new system, no special preference will be made for re-hires, but they will obviously come up higher for specific jobs in which they have experience. Decided not to put a limit on number of years or number of kids in a family, though did look at that. Some kids have worked for 5 or more years (the limit is 7) and some families have had multiple kids get jobs. Many departments have long multi-year waiting lists, and these also likely need to be eliminated.

What about local minority hires? Not currently targeting local community kids but may begin to do that as the budget allows.

**EAG Input:** The overall EAG response was that this is a good first attempt to address the issue, but need to be aware that there will be folks who try to game the system. Seven years seems too long to give to one kid, maybe 3 years seems more appropriate, however, some jobs may benefit from having candidates with experience so restricting the number of years might not make a lot of sense. In some ways this new process also helps the hiring manager a lot by organizing and prioritizing the candidates. It is important for the lab to bring equity and fairness to these programs, so this is important and part of our desire to have a more just culture. Would like to see the waiting list addressed for those who have been on the list a long time.

### **3) Management response to previous recommendations**

There was a specific recommendation last fall based on a series of comments from the survey and web requests. The EAG asked management to look into it and is wondering how this was handled. It does not appear that any action has been taken to date, as this would require going into the department and investigating directly.

**ACTION ITEM:** The EAG would still like to see this pursued. Young-Kee indicated that she would look into this and get back to the EAG in March.

#### **4) Reward and recognition recommendations**

These were distributed and are ready to go, looked at things that could be provided without additional cost, and also wanted to avoid any tax liability to employees that would occur from getting items of value (for example gas cards or gift cards). Anything from an employer to an employee would incur a tax liability. *De minimis* meals are an exception, so lunch at Chez Leon or the cafeteria or other on-site activities are an option. Of course, managers paying on their own are still able to do that, but the EAG was looking for ways to make it more formal and widespread. What about simply leaving a candy bar or some other item? That would be *de minimis*, and the lab could support this kind of activity.

Question about union participation in reward programs, union employees have a grievance clause so many managers would not pursue individual rewards, but would lean toward group awards so as to avoid the potential for individual grievances. Any time you make distinctions with a unionized group, this could lead to a grievance. Unions could negotiate to make these things non-grievable.

DOE would have to approve anything in this recommendation in order to move forward, has the EAG done any cost estimates? No, but that could be a next step. Can this be done like we do at fairs and events where we give out items? That sort of thing is generally done by FRA, and that is a possibility. However, spending any contract funds requires DOE approval. What is the current budget for morale per person? About \$10 per person. Exploring the per-person spending capability is probably the appropriate way to approach it, that is how these sorts of things are calculated and approached in the contract. It is important to understand this recommendation is meant to be much more than spending money, but this is a good start.

**EAG RECOMMENDATION:** The EAG agreed to move the recommendation forward.

#### **5) WDRS/communication recommendations**

Pulled together the range of suggestions from across the meeting summaries, they are across lots of different departments. This is just a collection of things that have come up in meetings but were never transmitted to management or followed through in any specific way. Some have already been addressed in one way or another. The question is what to do with these things.

The EAG discussed the list of suggestions to determine which had already been addressed and which should be carried forward. Katie Yurkewicz noted that the list would be very useful to have submitted formally so that she could act on specific items that make sense.

**ACTION ITEM:** Sandra Charles and Teri Dykhuis agreed to work with Eileen Berman to help move this list to a more formal recommendation.

#### **6) New member recruitment process**

The announcement will run tomorrow in Fermilab Today. Flyers have been produced and distributed to EAG members, feel free to distribute widely. Nomination period runs through March 16. Bruce Chrisman will be the formal contact. A Director's Corner is planned.

**EAG Input:** The EAG recommended including the in-between meetings as another possible obligation on the nomination form. Could also make EAG members available to field questions about what it is like to serve on the EAG. Put a link to the EAG page and note that any member of the EAG would be happy to talk about the experience and what to expect.

#### **7) Preview of Fermilab Video**

The goal was to create a new general video about Fermilab to show on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor, at the Lederman Center, make available on DVD, and on public access television. This video was made by the same folks who produced "Atom Smashers". What is the primary message? One is that the lab still exists and is relevant, obviously the video was started before the Tevatron was shut down but it was known that it would be. Also wanted to get across the fact that there are diverse groups of people here working on a lot of things.

**EAG Comments.** Overall, the EAG liked the video. Would be a good video to loan out to schools. Does a good job presenting the human side of the lab. However, it does not do a good job of showing the diversity of the lab staff, practical applications of high-energy physics, or applications in the community. A safety note, there was a point where an employee enters the lab wearing flip-flops. Liked the use of the model on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor, but it is not made clear where the bottle of hydrogen is used in the system. Might be useful to mention how many students and teachers that the lab visits each year in addition to those that come to the lab.

#### **8) 2012 Topics and issues for the EAG**

Need to look at shared values. This seems to be the next order of business for the EAG. The EAG can help to craft a vision for the lab, what is it we want to look like "x" years from now if it was possible. Underscore the importance of coming up with shared values.

We still have a big trust issue where employees just don't want to communicate, too much fear. A lot of it is tied to communication and management culture. Given that we recognize that it will take time to change the culture, a philosophical conversation needs

to coincide with tangibles to feel like we are making progress, not yet clear what those tangibles will be.

Need to identify some tangible goals that would empower people to take ownership, it is influenced from the top but everyone needs to own it. The philosophy alone will not make that culture change.

#### **9) Input to the EAG website**

Someone wrote to the EAG regarding saving money with regard to sending the procards in paper form. We did get an answer to this, but will also ask the person why they came to the EAG and not somewhere else.

#### **EAG Action Items:**

- Need a path forward on how the EAG will help to identify shared values and a vision for the lab.
- Sandra Charles, Teri Dykhuis, and Eileen Berman will create a formal recommendation from the WDRS/communication issues.